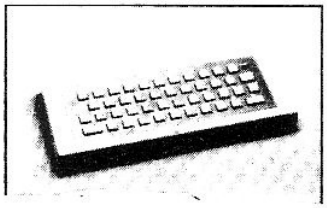


VZ200 INTERFACE - THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
OF THE VZ200 USERS' CLUB

INTERFACE

WELCOME

Welcome to the third issue of VZ200 Interface, the magazine for members of the VZ200 Users' Club. As I explained in earlier issues, we're using the magazine as a way of keeping you in touch with developments in the field, reviewing software packages and books, and sharing members' discoveries and ideas.

I hear from Les Bell, editor of **Your Computer**, that they'll be including a VZ200 page in the 'users' section near the back of the magazine. However, it won't be in every issue. Apparently, Your Computer doesn't think that 20,000 or so VZ200 owners deserve a page of their own each month. (If you disagree, why not write to the magazine and let them know your thoughts?).

Members have continued to write to us with tricks and routines they've discovered, and we pass on a number of them to you in this issue of the magazine.

Remember, if you decide to start a local branch of the VZ200 Users' Club, let us know so we can publicise your name and address. Note that we are <u>not able to reply to letters personally</u> but we will do our best to answer representative questions through the magazine. If there is a problem which we cannot answer, we'll throw it open to you, in the hope that someone will be able to provide us with a solution.

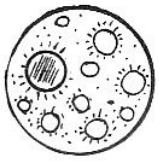
Please send your programs and other contributions to me at this address:

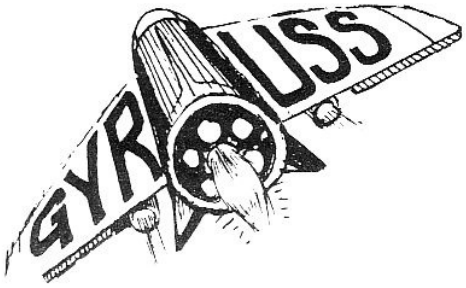
Tim Hartnell,
VZ200 Users' Club,
PO Box 321,
NORTH RYDE, NSW, 2113

See you in the next issue,

TIM HARTNELL,
Club co-ordinator

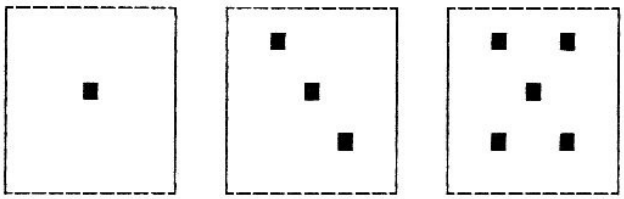
NOTE: If you change your address, or you have a technical query which should be addressed to Dick Smith, rather than to the club, please send it in a separate envelope to the one in which you write to the club. Otherwise, it may be mislaid.





Ian Mackereth, from Hawthorn, in S.A., has provided us with a great program to play the dice game YAHTZEE.

The game calls for judgement and skill, and uses five dice. Players throw to find out who goes first, with the lowest player going first up. Each player can throw up to three times each turn. After the first throw, he can set aside any dice he wishes to keep, and rethrow the balance. He can



do the same after the second and third throws. He can, of course, stop before the third throw if he wishes.

Once the player has decided to stop, he must decide into which category to enter his score.

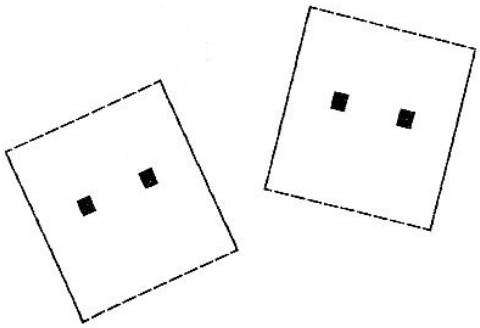
The categories are:

YACHT (5 of a kind) - worth 50 points
BIG STRAIGHT (2,3,4,5,6) - 30 points
LITTLE STRAIGHT (1,2,3,4,5) - 30
SIXES - scores six points for each six thrown
FIVES - scores five points for each five thrown (and so on using FOUR, THREES etc)

<u>The other categories score the total number of pips showing on the five dice:</u>

FOUR OF A KIND
FULL HOUSE (three of a kind plus a pair)
CHOICE (any five dice)

The game ends after 12 rounds. Once a score has been recorded for a particular category, that category can't be used again.



Here's a sample score sheet:

	DICK	TOM	HARRY
YACHT	:	:	:
BIG STRAGHT	:	:	:
LITTLE STRAIGHT:		:	:

...AND SO ON....

Now, here's Ian's listing, so you can play a round or two of the game:

```
100 CLS:POKE30744,0:COLOR5,0:CLEAR1000:PRINT@205, "YAHTZEE"
110 PRINT@480,"HIT ANY KEY TO CONTINUE: : A$=INKEY$
120 A$=INKEY$:R=RND(0):IFA$="" THEN120
130 CLS:INPUT"NO. OF PLAYERS";NP
140 DIM SC$(13,NP),S1$(13),S2$(13),N$(NP),DF(6,6),SC(NP),YF(NP)
145 GOSUB1000
150 FORI=1TONP
160 PRINT"PLAYER #";I;:INPUT"'S NAME";N$(I)
170 NEXT
180 FORTURN=1TO13
190 FORPL=1TONP
210 FORR=1TO5:ND(R)=RND(6):NEXT
220 GOSUB2000
230 GOSUB3000
240 PRINT@448,"REMEMBER THESE,THEN"
250 PRINT"HIT ANY KEY TO CONTINUE": A$=INKEY$
260 A$=INKEY$:IFA$="" THEN260
270 FORI=1TO6:N(I)=0:NEXT
280 FORI=1TO5:N(ND(I))=N(ND(I))+1:NEXT
290 CLS:PRINT"CHOOSE A CATEGORY,":N$(PL)
300 FORI=1TO13:PRINTUSING"##) ";I;
310 PRINTS1$(I);S2$(I);SC$(I,PL)
320 NEXT
330 PRINT:INPUT"WHICH (1-13)";IP
340 IFIP<1ORIP>13THEN290
345 IFIP=12THEN12000
350 IFSC$(IP,PL)<>""THEN15000
360 IFIP<7THENSC$(IP,PL)=STR$(IP*N(IP))
370 IFIP=7ORIP=8THEN7000
380 IFIP=9THEN9000
390 IFIP=10THEN10000
400 IFIP=11THEN11000
420 IFIP=13THEN13000
430 NEXT PL:NEXT TURN
440 FORPL=1TONP:FORI=1TO13
460 NEXT
470 FORI=1TO6
480 SC(PL)=SC(PL)+VAL(SC$(I,PL)):NEXT
490 IFSC(PL)>62THENSC(PL)=SC(PL)+35
500 FORI=7TO13
510 SC(PL)=SC(PL)+VAL(SC$(I,PL))
520 NEXT:NEXT
530 FORI=1TONP-1
540 HI=0:FORJ=ITONP
550 IFSC(J)>HITHENHI=SC(J):P=J
560 NEXT
570 D=SC(I):SC(I)=SC(P):SC(P)=D
580 D$=N$(I):N$(I)=N$(P):N$(P)=D$
585 NEXT
590 SOUND20,1:SOUND10,1:SOUND20,1
600 CLS:PRINT"AND THE PLACINGS ARE";
610 FORI=1TO5:FORJ=1TO200:NEXT:PRINT",": NEXT
620 PRINT:PRINT:FORI=1TONP
630 PRINTUSING"##";I;
640 PRINT") ";N$(I);TAB(25);SC(I)
650 NEXT
660 PRINT@480,"ANOTHER GAME (Y/N)?";
670 GOSUB20000
680 IFYN$="Y"THENRUN
690 END
1000 FORI=1TO6:FORJ=1TO7
1010 READDF(I,J):NEXT:NEXT
1020 FORI=1TO13
1030 READS1$(I),S2$(I):NEXT
1040 DATA66,33,99,0,66,132,33,35,97,99
1050 DATA0,4,66,128,132,1,3,65,87,129,131
1060 DATA"*ACES",".. (SUM OF 1'S) -","*TWOS",".. (SUM OF 2'S) -"
1070 DATA"*THREES",".. (SUM OF 3'S) -","*FOURS",".. (SUM OF 4'S) -"
1080 DATA"*FIVES",".. (SUM OF 5'S) -","*SIXES",".. (SUM OF 6'S) -"
1090 DATA"*3 OF A KIND",".. (SUM) -","*4 OF A KIND",".. (SUM) -"
1100 DATA"*FULL HOUSE",".. (25) -","*SM. STRAIGHT",".. (30) -"
1110 DATA"*LGE. STRAIGHT",".. (40) -","YAHTZEE",".. (50) -"
1120 DATA"*CHANCE",".. (SUM) -"
1130 RETURN
```

```
2000 CLS:PRINTN$(PL); "'S ROLL"
2010 FORR=96TO224STEP32:FORS=2TO28STEP8
2020 PRINT@R+S,"3 COLOURED BLOCKS (SHIFT-J)":
2030 NEXT:NEXT
2040 FORD=1TO5:FORN=1TOND(D)
2050 PRINT@32+D*8+DF(ND(D),N),"1 BLACK BLOCK (SHIFT-Z)":
2060 NEXT:NEXT
2070 RETURN
3000 FORK=1TO2:F=1
3010 FORJ=1TO5
3020 P=254+J*8:RR(J)=0
3030 PRINT@P,"*"
3040 PRINT:PRINT"REROLL THIS ONE (Y/N)?
3050 PRINT"(S FOR SCOREBOARD)":PRINT"(M FOR MISTAKE)":IN$=INKEY$
3060 YN$=INKEY$
3070 IFYN$<>"Y"ANDYN$<>"N"ANDYN$<>"S"ANDYN$<>"M"THEN3060
3072 IFYN$="Y"THENSOUND20,1
3074 IFYN$="N"THENSOUND10,1
3076 IFYN$="S"THENSOUND15,1
3078 IFYN$="M"THENSOUND20,2;10,1
3080 IFYN$<>"S"THEN3100
3090 CLS:PRINTTAB(5);N$(PL); "'S SCORES"
3100 FORI=1TO13:PRINTUSING"##) ";I; PRINTS1$(I);S2$(I);SC$(I,PL)
3110 NEXT:PRINT:PRINT"HIT ANY KEY TO RETURN: ";A$=INKEY$
3120 A$=INKEY$:IFA$="" THEN3120ELSEGOSUB2000:GOTO3020
3130 PRINT@P,"
3140 IFYN$="M"THEN3010
3150 IFYN$="Y"THENRR(J)=1
3160 NEXT
3170 FORI=1TO5:IFRR(I)=1THENND(I)=RND(6):F=0
3180 NEXT:IF F THEN K=2
3190 GOSUB2000
3200 NEXT
3210 RETURN
7000 FORI=1TO6:IFN(I)>IP*5THEN7030
7010 NEXT
7020 GOTO16000
7030 SC=0
7040 FORI=1TO5:SC=SC+ND(I):NEXT
7050 SC$(IP,PL)=STR$(SC)
7060 GOTO430
9000 FORI=1TO6
9010 IFN(I)>2THENN(I)=N(I)-3:GOTO9040
9020 NEXT
9030 GOTO16000
9040 FORI=1TO6
9050 IFN(I)>1THEN9080
9060 NEXT
9070 GOTO16000
9080 SC$(9,PL)=" 25"
9090 GOTO430
10000 FORI=1TO3:F=1:FORJ=ITO!+3
10010 IFN(J)=0THENF=0
10020 NEXT
10030 IFFTHEN10060
10040 NEXT
10050 GOTO16000
10060 SC$(10,PL)=" 30"
10070 GOTO430
11000 FORI=1TO2:F=1:FORJ=ITO!+4
11010 IFN(J)=0THENF=0
11020 NEXT
11030 IFFTHEN11060
11040 NEXT
11050 GOTO16000
11060 SC$(11,PL)=" 40"
11070 GOTO430
12000 FORI=1TO6
12010 IFN(I)=5THEN12040
12020 NEXT
12030 GOTO16000
12040 SC$(12,PL)=" 50"
12050 IF YF(PL) THEN SC$(12,PL)=STR$(VAL(SC$(12,PL))+100)
12060 YF(PL)=1
12070 GOTO 430
13000 SC=0:FORI=1TO5
13010 SC=SC+ND(I):NEXT
13020 SC$(13,PL)=STR$(SC)
13030 GOTO430
15000 SOUND15,1:CLS
15010 PRINT"YOU'VE ALREADY DONE"
15020 PRINT"THE ";S1$(IP); " ";N$(PL)
15030 FORI=1TO2000:NEXT
15040 GOTO290
16000 SOUND15,1:CLS
16010 PRINT"YOU'RE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR"
16020 PRINT"A ";S1$(IP); " ";N$(PL)
16025 IFIP=12ANDYF(PL)THENSOUND8,9:GOTO200
16030 PRINT:PRINT"DO YOU WANT IT ANYWAY (Y/N)?
16040 GOSUB20000
16050 IFYN$="N"THEN290
16060 SC$(IP,PL)=" 0"
16070 IFIP=12THENYF(PL)=1
16080 GOTO430
20000 YN$=INKEY$
20010 YN$=INKEY$:IFYN$="" THEN20010
20020 IFYN$<>"Y"ANDYN$<>"N"THEN20000
20030 IFYN$="Y"THENSOUND20,1ELSESOUND10,1
20040 RETURN
```

NOTES: A STRING PRECEDED BY A '*' IS TO BE TYPED IN INVERSE MODE
THE STRINGS IN LINES 2020 & 2050 ARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR WHAT TO TYPE IN
THESE MODIFICATIONS ARE NECESSARY BECAUSE OF THE PRINTER'S LIMITATIONS

From Belmore, NSW, Jim Athanasopoulos writes:

I was very pleased with the second issue of INTERFACE. I really like the 3-D program written by Paul Vowles. By the way, I am 14 years old. Here is a program I have written which converts degrees to radians:

```
ENTER DEGREES TO BE CONVERTED
? 123
 123 DEGREES EQUALS
    2.14675 RADIANS

ENTER DEGREES TO BE CONVERTED
? 34
 34 DEGREES EQUALS
    .593411 RADIANS
```

```
100 REM DEGREES TO RADIANS
110 CLS:PRINT:PRINT:PRINT
120 PRINT"ENTER DEGREES TO BE CONVERTED"
130 INPUT D1
135 LET R1=3.14159*D1/180
140 PRINT D1;"DEGREES EQUALS","    ";R1;"RADIANS"
```

Thanks Jim. I've just spent the last 10 minutes converting...

Steven Dimitriadis writes:

I am writing to tell you how thrilled I am at receiving the two "VZ200 INTERFACE" magazines and am looking forward to all the issues to come.

Before I bought my VZ200 I did not, apart from a lesson at school, know anything about computers or programming. But thanks to all the books which are now available, I'm well on the way to writing good programs.

I've discovered a little trick with the VZ200. Here it is:

```
10 A=RND(31)
20 SOUND A,1
30 GOTO 10
```

It is not very musical, but it shows the capabilities of the VZ200's sound.

Thanks, Steve. I enjoyed listing to the 'music'.

From Renown Park in South Australia, Rainer H Witthaus wrote to the magazine as follows:

Enjoy receiving your magazine "INTERFACE". Although seemingly simple, I suggest you try this program. I'm sure many people would find it fascinating, and add to it to their own liking.

```
1 REM RANDOM TREASURE
2 REM X MARKS  THE SPOT
3 REM DOTS FIND TREASURE
5 CLS
10 A=RND(511)
20 PRINT @A,"X"
30 FOR B=0 TO 511 STEP RND(511)
40 PRINT @B,"·"
45 CLS
50 IF A=B THEN 100
55 NEXT
60 GOTO 5
100 COLOR 4:PRINT @B,
            "":SOUND 3,9:GOTO 5
```

(Well, I couldn't really work out what was meant to be happening. It seems to me that the chance of the 'treasure' being found was very small indeed. Why don't you work on it, and see what you can make of it?)

Craig Vermeulen, Nambour, Queensland, has sent us a great game. Craig writes:

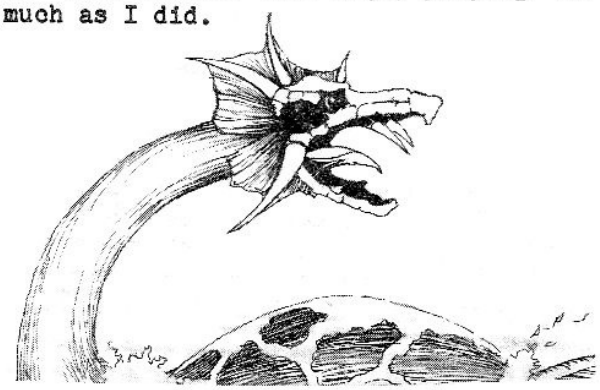
The idea of this game is to move the dot from one side of the screen to the other, and into the red line. Once you hit the red line you get 1000 points bonus and you start another set. The dangers are the walls, the dots, and your own tail.

You can select the keys you wish to use by entering the letter when the computer asks the direction.

I would like to know if there is a game of chess made for the VZ200, and if so, where I could get it.

```
10 CLS:POKE30744,1:COLOR2
20 CLS:PRINT"INPUT THE KEYS YOU WISH TO
USE":PRINT
30 INPUT"UP";U$:INPUT"LEFT";L$:INPUT"RIG
HT";R$:INPUT"DOWN";D$
40 SC=0
45 X=20:Y=20:Y1=1:X1=0
50 MODE(1):COLOR2
60 FORA=1TO127:SET(A,0):SET(A,63):NEXT
70 FORA=0TO63:SET(0,A):SET(127,A):NEXT
80 FORA=111TO127:COLOR4:SET(A,63):NEXT:C
OLOR2
90 FORA=1TO45:SET(63,A):SET(95,A):SET(29
,A+18)
100 SET(47,A+18):SET(24,A):SET(111,A+18)
:NEXTA
110 A$=INKEY$:IFA$=R$THENX1=1:Y1=0
120 IFA$=D$THENX1=0:Y1=1
130 IFA$=L$THENX1=-1:Y1=0
140 IFA$=U$THENX1=0:Y1=-1
150 IFA$=L$THENX1=-1:Y1=0
160 IFA$=U$THENX1=0:Y1=-1
170 X=X+X1:Y=Y+Y1:IFPOINT(X,Y)=2THEN300
180 IFPOINT(X,Y)=4THEN380
190 IFPOINT(X,Y)=3THEN350
200 COLOR3:SET(X,Y)
210 SC=SC+1
220 COLOR2:SET(RND(127),RND(63))
290 GOTO110
300 CLS:PRINT:PRINT"YOU HAVE BEEN DESTRO
YED"
310 PRINT"SCORE-";SC
320 INPUT"ANOTHER GAME(Y/N)";A$:IFA$="Y"
THEN40
330 IFA$="N"THENEND
340 GOTO300
350 CLS:PRINT:PRINT"YOU HIT YOUR OWN TAI
L"
360 PRINT"YOU HAVE BEEN DESTROYED":GOTO3
10
380 CLS:PRINT:PRINT"1000 POINTS BONUS":S
C=SC+1000:FORA=1TO1000
390 NEXTA:GOTO45
```

Well, Craig, I haven't heard of a chess program for the VZ200. However, if one is developed, I'm sure your nearest Dick Smith outlet will soon be selling it. (If any software companies out there have a chess program, please let us know!) The game is great fun, Craig, and I'm sure other club members will enjoy playing it as much as I did.



Also from Queensland is Gary Collins, who lives in Mitchell. Gary's letter reads:

I've enclosed two programs which I have made. The first one draws a kaleidoscope-like pattern which is very colourful. The second program is called CLOCK. It asks you to enter the current time (in minutes and hours) and from then on keeps the time for you, printing it up with the seconds changing on the screen.

```
10 REM KALEIDOSCOPE:
15 MODE (1)
20 FOR W=3 TO 50
30 FOR I=1 TO 19
40 FOR J=1 TO 19
50 K=I+J
60 COLOR RND(4)
70 SET(I,K):SET(K,I):SET(40-I,40-K)
75 SET(40-K,40-I)
80 SET(K,40-I):SET(40-I,K):
       SET(I,40-K):SET(40-K,I)
90 NEXT J,I,W:GOTO 20
```

```
5 REM CLOCK
10 CLS
20 S=0
30 INPUT"NUMBER OF MINUTES";M
40 INPUT "NUMBER OF HOURS";H
50 FOR A=1 TO 560:NEXT A
60 S=S+1
70 IF S=60 THEN PRINT@236,
              "    ":M=M+1:S=0
80 IF M=60 THEN H=H+1:M=0
90 IF H=13 THEN H=1:M=0
100 PRINT @228,H;":";
              M;":";S;"      "
110 GOTO 50
```

Your pattern program is very clever, Gary. Perhaps some other club member might want to modify it so that it fills the whole screen. I boiled my breakfast egg today using a modification of your clock program. I got it to sound a tone when three and a half minutes were up. Worked well, too. Perhaps Dick Smith should start selling VZ200 as 'handy egg timers'!

If you are using programs with DATA lines, why not use the VZ200 capability by a subroutine that will use new data to create revised data lines, as follows:

```
100 DATA 56
110 INPUT A
120 READ B
130 C=A+B
140 PRINT C
150 PRINT "100 DATA";C
```

Now CSAVE and the next time the program is used (once you have moved the cursor up to the last printed line and entered) the new data will be in the program.

With a FOR/NEXT loop, the theory can be applied to extensive programs. For example, you can use it to update top scores in games programs, or to update a budget program.

Gordon Woolf,
Bundoora, Vic.

Thanks, Gordon. Seems like a good idea.

Colac is the home of Stephen Wilson, who has sent us the program which wins the prize as 'the best one in the issue'. Here's what Stephen had to say:

I have sent you a game which I have programmed.

The game is called DOG-FIGHT, and as the name suggests, you are in a plane and must endeavour to shoot down another plane. Sights appear on the screen, and you must move your place (using the right and left arrow keys) to get the target plane dead in the centre of the sights. You shoot with the "Z" key. You'll be given 10 planes to shoot down, and at the end told how many you managed to get. Then you'll be offered a new game.

I enjoyed playing the game, Stephen, and I'm sure other club members will do so as well, so here is DOG-FIGHT:

```
10 SC=0:ML=0
20 MODE(1):COLOR 3
30 FOR K=0 TO 127
40 IF K>63 THEN 60
50 IF K>24 AND K<40 THEN SET(50,K):SET(78,K) ELSE SET(64,K)
60 IF K>49 AND K<79 THEN SET(K,25):SET(K,39) ELSE SET(K,32)
```

```
70 NEXT
100 X=RND(123)+1:Y=63:COLOR 4:GOTO 140
110 RESET(A,4):RESET(A+1,4):RESET(A-1,4)
120 RESET(A+2,4):RESET(A-2,4):RESET(A,Y-1)
130 Y=Y-1:IF Y=1 THEN 200
140 SET(X,Y):SET(X+1,Y):SET(X-1,Y)
150 SET(X+2,Y):SET(X-2,Y):SET(X,Y-1)
152 RESET(X,Y):RESET(X+1,Y):RESET(X-1,Y)
154 RESET(X+2,Y):RESET(X-2,Y):RESET(X,Y-1)
160 GOSUB 1000
170 GOTO 110
200 ML=ML+1:IF ML=10 THEN 210 ELSE 20
210 CLS
220 PRINT:PRINT"YOU SHOT DOWN";SC,"OUT OF 10 PLANES"
230 PRINT:PRINT:PRINT "ANOTHER GO";
240 INPUT AN$
250 IF LEFT$(AN$,1)="Y" THEN 10 ELSE CLS:END
1000 A=X
1010 IF INKEY$="M" THEN 1050
1020 IF INKEY$="," THEN 1070
1030 IF INKEY$="Z" THEN 1100
1040 RETURN
1050 X=X+2:IF X>125 THEN X=125
1060 RETURN
1070 X=X-2:IF X<2 THEN X=2
1080 RETURN
1100 SOUND 15,2
1110 FOR K=34 TO 64 STEP 2
1120 SET(K,96-K):SET(127-K,96-K)
1130 NEXT
1140 FOR K=34 TO 64 STEP 2
1150 RESET(K,96-K):RESET(127-K,96-K)
1160 NEXT
1170 IF X<67 AND X>61 AND Y<34 AND Y>30 THEN 1200
1180 SOUND 1,2
1190 RETURN
1200 SOUND29,2;31,2
1205 FOR T=1 TO 3
1210 FOR K=1 TO 20
1220 SET(RND(10)+59,RND(10)+27)
1230 NEXT
1240 FOR K=1 TO 30
1250 SET(RND(30)+49,RND(30)+17)
1260 NEXT
1265 NEXT
1270 SC=SC+1:ML=ML+1:IF ML=10 THEN 210
1280 GOTO 20
```

BOOKS ON THE VZ200

There are now at least six books available on the VZ200, and Dick Smith tells me more are in preparation. The ones I've been involved in are **GETTING STARTED**, **FURTHER PROGRAMMING** and **THE GIANT BOOK OF VZ200 GAMES**. Here's what you'll find in them.

GETTING STARTED (Dick Smith catalogue number B-7206) is designed for you if the VZ200 is your first computer. After discussing how to use the keyboard, and access the keywords, it goes on to discuss such things as the use of PRINT and CLS and string manipulation. Random numbers, and their use in game are discussed next, then FOR/NEXT loops, GOTO and the use of the SOUND command come under scrutiny.

$9.95 each

FURTHER PROGRAMMING ON YOUR VZ200 (Dick Smith catalogue number B-7208) assumes you know how to program to some extent in BASIC. Structured programming and the use of flow charts are discussed in the first chapter, and a TIC TAC TOE (Noughts and Crosses) program is developed to show structured programming ideas in action. The second chapter looks in detail at ways of producing moving graphics, using both PRINT @ and POKE. Several programs are included to show how these work. MODE 1 graphics are discussed in the third section, and the fourth one concentrates on SOUND. From there, the book discusses some of the advantages of having additional memory at your disposal, and the next chapter explains how you can write intelligent board games on your VZ200. Nine major games (including OTHELLO and LIFE) round out the book.

THE GIANT BOOK OF VZ200 GAMES (Dick Smith catalogue number B-7210) contains complete listings, plus playing instructions, for more than 30 games, along with a number of ideas which you can turn into computer games of your own. The games are: GOMOKU, FOUR IN A ROW, CHECKERS, KNIGHTSBRIDGE, STRONGHOLD OF THE DWARVEN LORDS, THE DUKE OF DRAGONFEAR, MISTRESS OF XENOPHOBIA, RURAL PURSUITS, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, CHEMIN DE COMPUTER, SEVEN/ELEVEN, NO SWEAT, ONE-AND-TWENTY, SNAKES EYES, UNDER' N'OVER, ELECTRONIC BRAIN, AMANUENSIS, FASTER, INNER SPRING, ROBOT MINEFIELD CELESTIA, BILLBOARD, MOONLANDER, HYPER-WAR, IDAHO STARS, EXECUTIONER, CUBIC, MUMBLE MARBLE, CYCLOTRON and FLIPPER.

LETTERS

I would appreciate it if you could publish my address as I am starting a local users club.

Paul Andrews,
8 Glenhelen Road,
Morphett Vale,
SA 5162

If you live near Paul, why not drop him a line?

I enclose for your interest from the magazine PRACTICAL COMPUTING what appears to be a review of the English version of the VZ200. I'd like to say that I am still happy with my VZ200, though I think the article is correct when it says there is only 4K of user memory. This would explain why any attempt to PEEK or POKE to addresses above 32767 (7FFF) gives only an 'overflow error' message, and why the method of reserving space at the top of memory, described as 'method 3' on page 15 of the Technical Reference manual doesn't appear to work.

A similar mystery surrounds the amount of memory included with the machine. The company claims that there is 8K but a look at the memory map shows only 4K.

Memory map of Texet TX-8000.

0000-3FFF	Operating-system ROM
4000-67FF	Not used
6800-6FFF	Input/output
7000-77FF	Video display RAM 2K
7800-7FFF	User RAM, 2K
8000-FFFF	Expansion area

The 2K video memory allows two graphics modes — text and a so-called High Resolution mode. In the text mode, characters can be located in any one of the 32 by 16 locations on the text screen. They can be printed in the normal manner or Poked into the appropriate area of memory, the first 512 bytes of the video RAM; 255 characters are available in the Text mode.

Jack Branston,
Williamstown

Ed NOTE: The Australian version does in fact have a full 6K user RAM, 7800H to 9000H. To access a memory location above 32767 is quite simple. Just subtract the number 65536 from the required memory address to give a negative number. So, to POKE into (say) 41500, simply subtract 65536 from 41500 to give -24036, easy.

SOFTWARE REVIEW

Your local Dick Smith outlet has a host of great software for the VZ200, and I've asked club member George Harris to review one of them for us. Over to you, George:

Learjet

Boy, if I ever had hopes of being a pilot, they've been completely downed by my experiences with this program. My skill at flying can be summed up in one word: Hopeless.

Here's what the instructions say: The object of the game is to test your skills as a Learjet pilot. Once you have chosen a routine, it is then up to you to successfully take-off, fly and land the aircraft, from departure to destination, using the least amount of fuel. Your skills may be further tested by problems that could be encountered en route, such as an in-flight cabin depressurisation...

That worried me. However, once I got my plane 'up in the air' I found it was not as difficult as I had imagined. For a start, the program tends to lead you through the actions required, and a section at the back of the manual headed 'how to fly your Learjet in one easy lesson' helped a lot. It is not, however, an easy program to master. It has been well (could I say brilliantly?) written, and is aimed at those who want a game which cannot be mastered in five minutes, so that boredom sets in after ten. You'll find it a challenge (but a very worthwhile one) which will take you weeks to become adept at it.

I liked the fact that all the destinations were either in Australia, or pretty close by. Landing at Melbourne or Sydney is a lot better than landing at Chicago, I always say. J Keech and P Russell who wrote the program deserve congratulation. And if you fancy yourself as a pilot, you might like to take on the challenge.

But don't expect it to be easy!

Learjet is Dick Smith Catalogue number X-7241.

Other programs available from Dick Smith include:

GHOST HUNTER (X-7242)
TYPING TEACHER (X-7258)
CIRCUS (X-7236)
HEX UTILITIES (X-7280), and
STARBLASTER (X-7247, 24K required)

Another club member will be looking at them in the next issue of Interface.

R S Miller, 8 Mulga Street, Altona, 3018 has a range of VZ200 software available by mail order. The programs include SUPER INVADERS ($10.00), PAKMAN ($10.00), GRAPHICS PACKAGE ($10.00), VZ DEBUG ($20.00) plus a handling charge of $1.50 per order. I haven't seen any of the stuff running, so if you decide to get hold of some, let me know what it's like.

In its various incarnations around the world, the VZ200 is getting quite a bit of press coverage. Here are just a few of the clippings we've seen:

The Video Technology VZ200

David H. Ahl

The Video Technology VZ200 is a compact microcomputer with a great deal of capability and many unexpected features at a very attractive price.

The VZ200 is based on the 6502 microprocessor (used in the Apple, Commodore, and Atari computers). It comes with a 12K ROM and a sparse 4K RAM. The ROM includes the monitor and an excellent implementation of Microsoft Basic. The RAM can be expanded with either a 16K or 64K module.

The computer is 11.4" x 6.3" x 2". Two-thirds of the top is taken up by the keyboard. The 45 keys are "Chiclet" style rubber with a very short throw. Touch typing is possible only in a rather limited way. Although the key spacing is the same as on a regular typewriter, the feel is different. Much more disasterous for touch typing is the use of a single shift key and a space key instead of a space bar. Several keys do not have the expected characters; e.g., the question mark is on the L key.

On the brighter side, each key provides several functions in addition to typing a character. All the Basic commands, keywords, and functions can be produced by holding the control key (or control and RETURN) while the key is pressed. Each key produces two Basic keywords and one or two regular characters. This is most welcome since on the computers which use a single keystroke the number of Basic keywords is limited to the number of keys.

On-Screen Editing

Full on-screen editing makes it a pleasure to program on the VZ200.

Summary

All in all, the Video Technology folks in Hong Kong have done an excellent job producing a versatile small computer. We were impressed with the excellent implementation of Microsoft Basic, full on-screen editing, repeat keys, and easy-to-use graphics features. The idiosyncrasies were a bit annoying, but owners will get used to them and probably not notice them after a week or two of use. Bottom line: the VZ200 is a great value for the suggested price of under $100.

Video Technology (U.S.), Inc., 2633 Greenleaf, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007.

As manufacturers of most products know, there is a magical quality about round figures, and a popular question from the first-time micro buyer is, "What can I get for £100?"

Not very long ago, the salesman's response would have been a derisory laugh as he showed you the door, but now there is a variety of equipment in the cheapest price range, even if the answer to the question is still, "Not a lot".

Leaving the Spectrum and Oric to their vastly more popular 48K versions, our effective choice is between the Laser 200, Mattel Aquarius, Tandy MC10 and Texas TI99/4a.

The Texas and Laser are much better, with screen editing systems and the TI's high-quality keyboard. The Texas uses a rather non-standard form of Basic, but this is unlikely to cause problems unless you are used to a Microsoft-style Basic.

The choice is not clear-cut. The Texas is by far the best computer in the group, and very good value for £100. But the Aquarius also puts up a reasonable showing at its new price, as a sort of colour ZX81

	Aquarius	Laser	Texas
Memory	●	●	●●●●
Documentation	●●●●●	●●	●●●
Software support	●●	●	●●●
Ease of use	●	●●●●	●●●
Sound	●●	●	●●●●
Graphics	●●	●	●●●●
Value	●●●	●●	●●●●●

Laser 200

Price: **£70**
Use: **Home**
RAM: **4K**
Colour: **Yes**
Language: **Basic**
Interface: **Own**
Supplier: **Computers for All 0268 418414**

For: The lowest price of any home computer in the UK; reasonable keyboard and Basic interpreter including handy choice of conventional or one-key program entry.

Against: Sound is only up to (weak) Spectrum standard, graphics are distinctly low-resolution at 128 x 64. 16K memory expansion raises price to Spectrum level.

Conclusion: Performance is distinctly better than that of some recent big-name attempts at a £100 home computer (notably Tandy and Mattel). However, the Spectrum still shows the way.

October 1983 — The Laser — A shot in the dark?